

REMARKS

Claims 37-45 and 47-68 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 37 and 43 are amended and claims 46 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Support for these amendments can be found at least at page 4, lines 17-28, page 5 lines 1-12, page 6 lines 1-28, page 7 line 28 and page 8 lines 1-4.

Claim 43 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention. Claim 43 is amended for clarity. Applicants respectfully assert that one having ordinary skill in the art would find the scope of claim 43 clear and distinct. Therefore, claim 43 is definite and is in proper compliance with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, and thus the rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 37-45, 49-51, 53-61 and 66-67 are rejected under 35 U.S.C 102(b) as being anticipated by Locker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,077,483, herein after Locker). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Locker does not disclose a method of producing a honeycomb structure having an outer wall and a cell structure, in which the outer wall configured of a material in such that the "absolute value of the difference between the proportion of shrinkage in the size of the cell structure after firing to the size of the cell structure before firing and the proportion of shrinkage in the size of the material for forming outer wall after firing to the size of the material for forming outer wall before firing is not more than 0.5%," as recited in claims 37 and 53.

The Office Action alleges Locker prepares the claimed materials and uses the same firing procedure, and thus teaches of a proportion of shrinkage that is not more than 0.5%. However, Locker does not disclose a proportion of shrinkage that is not more than 0.5% for at least the reason that the firing procedure disclosed by Locker is not equivalent to the firing

procedure claimed. Particularly, the firing procedure disclosed by Locker does not exceed 1375 degrees Celsius (Table II), which does not equate to the 1425 degrees Celsius as disclosed in the current application (page 27, lines 5-10) and necessary to achieve a proportion of shrinkage not more than 0.5%. Thus, Locker cannot be considered to disclose a proportion of shrinkage that is not more than 0.5%, since the firing process of Locker does not reach the required temperature.

Further, Locker is directed to improving converter mount durability at a high temperature by using a thermal barrier coating on a ceramic substrate (col. 1 lines 66, col. 2 line 1). An object of the present invention is to provide a high-strength and large-sized honeycomb structure with substantially no cracks in the outer wall (page 4, lines 12-14). In order to accomplish a large-sized honeycomb structure without cracks in the outer wall, the absolute value of the difference between the proportion of shrinkage in the size of the cell structure after firing to the size of the cell structure before firing and the proportion of shrinkage in the size of the material for forming outer wall after firing to the size of the material for forming outer wall before firing has to be not more than 0.5%, as recited in claims 37 and 53.

Additionally, Locker does not disclose a method of producing a honeycomb structure having an outer wall and a cell structure, wherein the "cell structure after firing has a section formed by cutting along a plane perpendicular to the central axis whose maximum diameter is 150 mm or more," as recited in claim 37.

Claims 46-49, 50 and 62-66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Locker and further in view of Kotani et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,629,067, herein after Kotani). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

This rejection is premised upon the presumption that Locker discloses all of the features of claims 37 and 53. Because, as discussed above, Locker does not disclose all of the

features of claims 37 and 53, the rejection is improper. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

Claims 52 and 68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Locker in view of Kotani and further in view of Patil (U.S. Patent No. 5,125,231, herein after Patil). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

This rejection is premised upon the presumption that Locker discloses all of the features of claims 37 and 53. Because, as discussed above, Locker does not disclose all of the features of claims 37 and 53, the rejection is improper. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 37 and 53 are patentable over Locker. Further, it is respectfully submitted that claims 38-45, 47-52 and 54-68 are patentable at least in view of the patentability of claims 37 and 53, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 37-45, 47-61 and 63-68 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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